

# **An Introduction to the American Community Survey**

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## **America is Changing, and So is the Census**

The Census Bureau's American Community Survey is an ongoing survey that produces important statistics about our nation's people and housing. It covers the same type of information that had been collected every 10 years from the decennial census long form questionnaire. The American Community Survey eliminated the need for a separate long form in the 2010 Census.

American Community Survey data are collected continuously throughout the year and throughout the decade. This allows the Census Bureau to produce new data every year about how communities are changing. It provides elected officials, community leaders and businesses current data to address a wide range of current social and economic issues. With the American Community Survey, it's no longer necessary to rely on a single snapshot of an area that becomes increasingly dated throughout the decade. Instead, the survey provides a moving picture of community characteristics — a more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

## **2010 Census + American Community Survey = A New Portrait of America**

The American Community Survey is sent to about 3 million addresses in the U.S. and Puerto Rico every year. In contrast, the decennial census goes to every address in the U.S. and Puerto Rico once every 10 years in years ending with "0" (e.g., 1990, 2000, 2010, etc.).

Together, the decennial census and the American Community Survey show not only how many people live here, but how we live as a nation — our diversity, education, housing, jobs and more.

The information helps community leaders decide where schools, highways, hospitals and other services are needed. Federal and state governments distribute more than \$400 billion annually back to communities based on census data.

As part of the decennial census program, responses to the American Community Survey are required by law. All responses are used for statistical purposes only, and all are strictly confidential.

For more information, visit the American Community Survey Web page at <http://www.census.gov/acs>.

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